

To the FCC:

We have not received confirmation from you that you received a letter we wrote to you earlier this week about the Sinclair Broadcasting situation. We are consequently writing again; the updated text of our earlier letter is below:

To the FCC:

As Americans, we are writing to protest Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry piece deceptively described as a "documentary," just days before the upcoming Presidential election.

As Democrats, we are likely to disagree with the content of the piece, but we want to make it clear that our objection to Sinclair's present action is based not on partisanship but on principle: For Sinclair or any other media giant to force its stations to broadcast what is actually an extended piece of negative campaign advertising in the guise of "journalism" is asking them to collude in misrepresentation of the worst kind, and we believe that it is dangerous to our democracy.

This incident is yet another clear and highly disturbing

example of the dangers of media consolidation, about which we have deep and longstanding concerns, and about which we have written to the FCC in the past.

The airwaves belong to the American people. Sinclair uses them free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies like Sinclair control the airwaves, the potential for abuse is great, and the present instance is a glaring example of such abuse.

Sinclair's allegiance to the Republican party is well known, but as we noted above, the problem here is not just their partisanship, but their misuse of the public airwaves to broadcast opinion disguised as fact, partisanship disguised as objective reporting.

If Sinclair wants to broadcast this piece, it should be required to label it honestly as what it is -- a campaign ad -- and provide equal time to the opposing view.

In our view, Sinclair's actions this week clearly illustrate why the FCC should strengthen media ownership rules rather than weakening them, and illustrate exactly why the license renewal process needs to involve

more than a rubber
stamp on a returned
postcard.

We understand that
comments on this
matter are due by
November 1st, but
November 1st is too
late for the FCC to
address this urgent
matter. We ask that
you take IMMEDIATE
action to stop
Sinclair from
requiring its
stations to
broadcast "Stolen
Honor," and/or that
you require Sinclair
to require its
stations to
broadcast "Going
Upriver" immediately
afterward -- and,
further, to label
both films
accurately as
advocacy pieces.

Either solution
would be in line
with the principles
of balance,
fairness, and
honesty; and either
would serve to
protect and promote
the public interest,
in line with the
obligations of those
who are licensed by
the FCC to use the
public airwaves.

Very respectfully,

Thea & Steve Merrill
Los Altos, CA